

WORCESTER, MASS.
TELEGRAM

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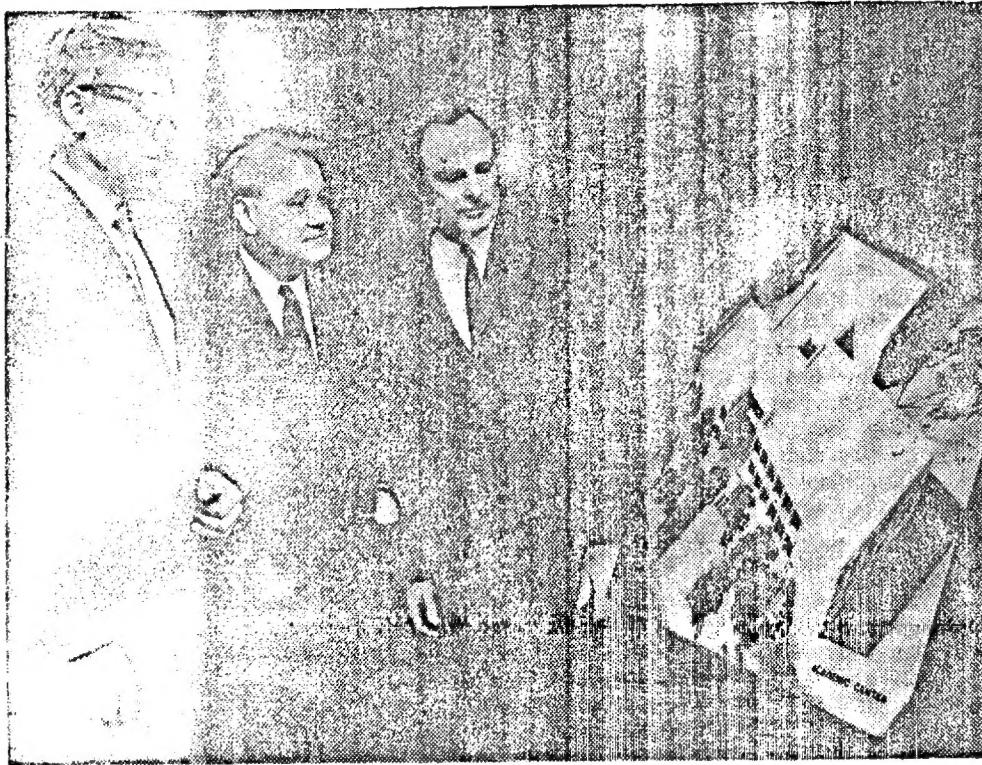
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At Leicester Junior College Founders' Day yesterday were (from left) Albert B. Southwick, chairman of the Leicester Room Committee; historian Henry Steele Commager; and Dr. Henry C. Borger Jr., college president. They are viewing plans for the college's new academic center.

Commager Says Founding Fathers Had 'More Confidence in People'

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Historian Henry Steele Commager told a Leicester Junior College audience yesterday that the nation's founding fathers had more confidence in the intelligence of the people than do today's government leaders.

Speaking at the college's Founders' Day program, Commager said that "they did not think it their business to inculcate" a feeling of patriotism or national pride in the people."

He described what he called

"a current readiness to use government" to promote things American.

"There were no government committees concerned with this problem," he said. "Now the USIA (United States Information Agency) and probably even the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) are busy promoting a good image for America."

Leicester Room

The Founders' Day program was sponsored by the Leicester

Room Committee, which is gathering historical items for a Leicester Room that will be part of a planned academic center at the college.

Commager, speaking on "The Uses of the Past," said the Americanizing the government is now doing was once a natural process. It came about, he said, because of common habits acquired in American education and through the influence of American literature.

By allowing the process to take place naturally, Commager said, "our forebears were wiser than we tend to be."

Most Creative

The era in which the United States was established, he called "the most creative in our history."

"Very few of us stop to think that our forefathers actually 'brought forth' a nation," he said. "Ours was the first nation to be created. Nations formerly grew."

In wide-ranging commentary on American history, Commager said:

— "Our history has been remarkably free of villains, but has had heroes aplenty."

— When the nation's symbols and mottoes were being selected Benjamin Franklin suggested a turkey, because the bald eagle was a malevolent bird and the turkey was at least useful. He was perfectly right, but he got nowhere.

— The Colonial revolutionaries were remarkable for their "survival ability." In no other country "did they manage to live from the Revolution on through to a state of ultimate respectability."

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Common Enemy

— The American Indians were "the best common enemy in history. America needed a common enemy to forge nationalism and, with the Indians, there was the built-in guarantee that you'd always win. They had all of the advantages of a common enemy with none of the disadvantages."

Arthur F. Schrader, music associate and ballad singer at Old Sturbridge Village, gave renditions of American songs of the revolutionary and later periods.

The building which will house the Leicester Room is a \$773,000 academic center. A drive to raise funds for the building began last week. The college and the town are cooperating in the Leicester Room project.